

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 173 (2004)¹ on challenges for local democracy in South-eastern Europe

The Congress,

1. Having regard to the work carried out in the Council of Europe and in particular:

- a.* Recommendation 112 (2002) on the Forums of Cities and Regions of South-eastern Europe;
- b.* Recommendation 132 (2003) on municipal property in the light of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;
- c.* Chişinău Political Declaration on Transfrontier and Interterritorial Co-operation between states in South-eastern Europe;
- d.* European Code of Conduct for Local and Regional Elected Representatives;
- e.* local and regional democracy reports prepared by the Congress;
- f.* declarations adopted at the Forums of the Cities and Regions of South-eastern Europe;
- g.* report prepared by the Council of Europe Decentralisation Mission in Kosovo;
- h.* political and legal advice given by the Council of Europe on new draft legislation in the field of local democracy in South-eastern Europe;
- i.* work of the ad hoc Working Group of the Local and Regional Representatives of South-eastern Europe (GT-SEE) and report on challenges for local democracy in South-east Europe prepared by Mr Sofianski;

2. Bearing in mind the work of other international organisations and institutions, in particular that of the European Union; the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe; and the Summits of Heads of State or Government of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP);

3. Acknowledging that the European Charter of Local Self-Government is ratified by the majority of countries of South-eastern Europe and that most of the countries in this region have recently developed new, or amended

the existing, legislation concerning local and regional authorities with a view to bringing it into compliance with the Charter;

4. Noting that extensive co-operation has developed between the Council of Europe, in particular the Congress, and the relevant authorities in the countries of South-eastern Europe;

5. Convinced that the need for stronger local government in the countries of South-eastern Europe is recognised and the reform process is in progress;

6. Bearing in mind that some of the countries close to South-eastern Europe will soon become members of the European Union and some are on the way to becoming members;

7. Acknowledging the valuable work carried out by the Local Democracy Agencies and their European partner cities, regions and non-governmental organisations, as a useful means of developing transfrontier co-operation, civil society and democratic stability, and the work of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-eastern Europe (NALAS) under the auspices of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe with the financial and technical support of the Swiss Government and the Local Government Initiative of the Open Society Institute,

8. Invites the local authorities of the South-eastern Europe countries to:

- a.* provide their input into the modification of the legal framework and updating of their national legislation in order to meet the requirements of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;
- b.* continue public administration reform at the local level;
- c.* run their communities responsibly, cost-efficiently, openly and in accordance with the will of the citizens;
- d.* introduce coherent strategies fixing the overall priorities at the local level;
- e.* promote good governance and reduce corruption at local level by increasing transparency and accountability in local government bodies;
- f.* plan, implement and finance their activities on the basis of own budget and financial resources;
- g.* adopt relevant guidelines to resolve issues regarding municipal property;
- h.* take full responsibility for their actions;
- i.* increase reporting standards;
- j.* encourage civic participation in local decision-making;
- k.* develop strategies for (re-)training of personnel at the local level;

l. consider forming associations and joining international organisations of local authorities;

m. co-operate with local authorities in other regions and countries;

n. foster closer links and co-operation between municipalities and cross-border co-operation;

o. secure at the local level freedom of expression, protection of sources, access to information and pluralism of media and fight against irresponsible journalism;

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 27 May 2004, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG (11) 7, draft resolution presented by S. Sofianski (L, EPP/CD), rapporteur).